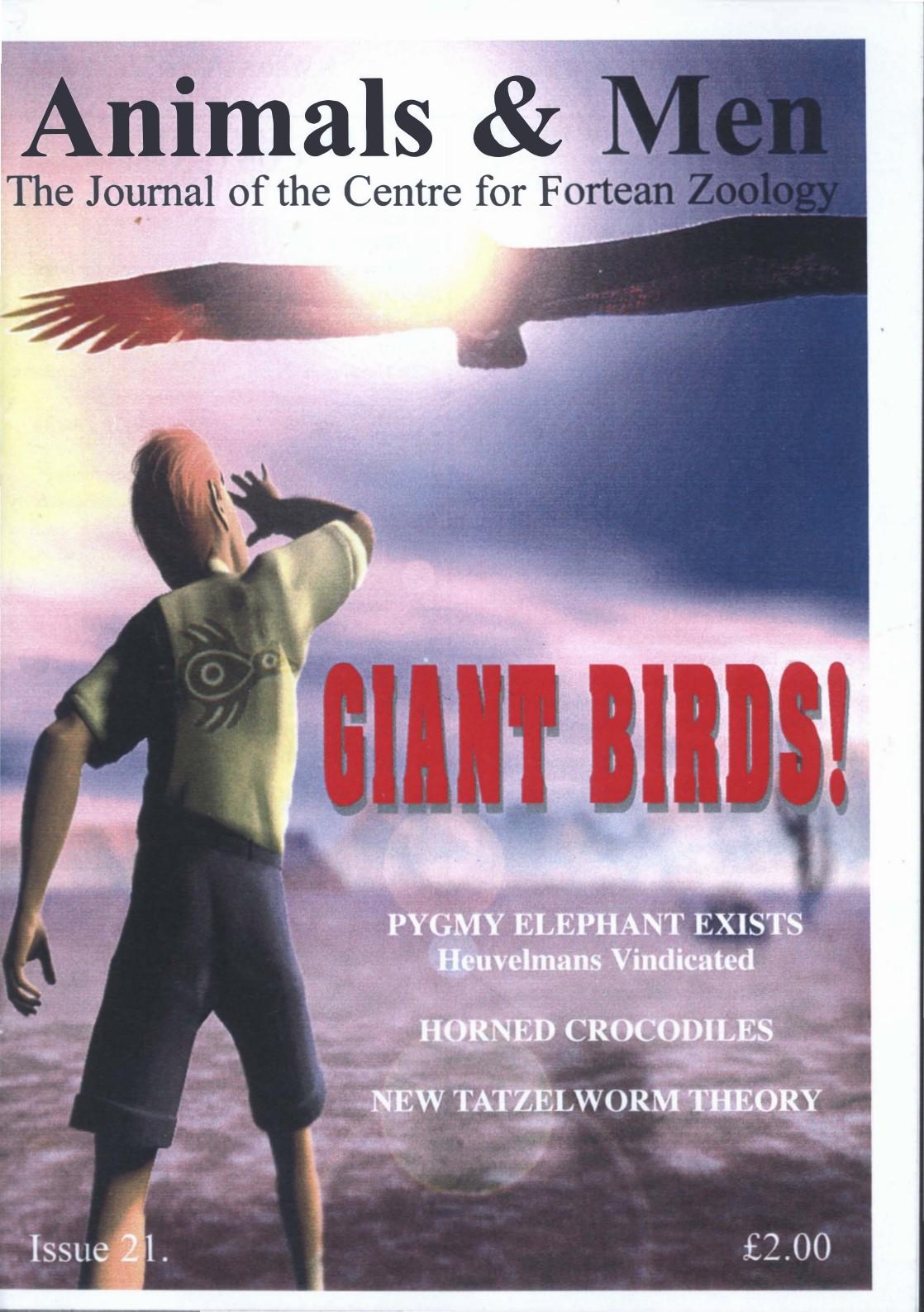


Animals & Men

The Journal of the Centre for Fortean Zoology



GIANT BIRDS!

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Heuvelmans Vindicated

HORNED CROCODILES

NEW TATZELWORM THEORY

Issue 21.

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"In her abnormalities, nature reveals her secrets"
(Goethe)

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ANIMALS & MEN

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THE GREAT DAYS OF ZOOLOGY ARE NOT DONE...

Dear Friends,

Welcome to another issue of *Animals & Men*. With this issue – number 21 – we have finally come of age! With our new found maturity comes responsibilities, and so we have decided to launch two new projects for the new millennium. The first, suggested by our friend and colleague Erik Sorensen involves one of the most under explored branches of European Fortean Zoology.

In the same way that it sometimes seems that every major lake in the continent is reputed to contain a monster of some kind there are cryptozoological denizens of many of the smaller bodies of European water. Everything from village ponds to canals and from reservoirs to lakes are reputed to be the haunt of monstrous fish. Whether they be the huge perch described by John Blashford-Snell in *Mysteries* [1983] to the giant pike described in Arthur Ransome's classic children's

adventure tale *The Big 6*. We are collecting folklore surrounding extra large fish and wherever possible documentary evidence and photographs. Some extraordinary pictures of massive Danish pike will be featured in the next issue of A&M and we hope to build up a comprehensive look at Europe's fantastic fishes over the next year.

Our second new project is a comprehensive study of the golden frog phenomenon from its roots in mediaeval folklore to the current reality of multicoloured denizens of every garden pond. We are currently in search of specimens. We have one already and we hope to gain more over the summer in an attempt to commence a breeding programme in the spring of 2001.

Watch this space.....

Jon Downes
(Editor)



Newsfile



Collated and compiled by the
Boys of the Old Brigade

MYSTERY CATS



EDITOR'S NOTE: It has been a long time since we did a run-down of ABC stories from about the globe so I will make no apologies whatsoever for devoting the greater part of this Newsfile to a peek at mystery moggies worldwide.....

UK: CORNWALL

Part-time servicemen spent a weekend in November 1999 hoping to throw new light on the long running mystery of the Beast of Bodmin during night exercises on wild Cornish moorland. Forty RAF reservists watched for the legendary big cat during a training exercise on Bodmin moor. The men, from the RAF's 2625 Auxiliary Regiment Squadron at RAF St Mawgan, north Cornwall, were equipped with night vision aids, but despite hopeful rumours no evidence of any import was gathered. *The Guardian* 3.11.99

UK: KENT

On the first of November 1999 an animal, thought to be a puma, attacked a dog being walked at Minster, on the Isle of Sheppey, Kent, yesterday. Police warned people not to go near the 4ft long black cat but as can be seen from Neil Arnold's article in this issue he was intrepid enough to ignore the rozzers and provide the CFZ with their first concrete sighting since Jon's in May 1997. *Mirror Group Ltd*, 2.11.1999.

UK: DEVON

- At the end of October 1999 various newspapers announced that police were investigating the sighting of a mysterious

various large "puma-like" black cat at Cornwood on Dartmoor. A local woman, who has asked not be named, was alarmed to see the creature chasing pheasants in a field on the Blachford estate, and called the police. She spotted the creature from the garden of her house at 6pm on Monday, and went inside to her bedroom upstairs to get a better look.

She is convinced she saw a big cat similar to other sightings reported on Dartmoor and on the northern edge of Plymouth. Last year armed police were mobilised after reports of a "lion" on the loose at Wrangaton. Ivybridge police officer Pc Chris May said: *"This woman said it was longer than a dog and bigger than an alsatian. It had a long tail and was jet black."* Two police officers searched the area and spoke with a local farmer but no animal carcasses or big cat footprints could be found. News of the sighting soon spread throughout the village.

Marion Meadows, landlady of The Cornwood Inn, said: *"Someone came into the pub and told me that a panther had been seen on the Blachford Estate. I think it should be taken seriously. I often walk on the moors with my two cocker spaniel dogs and this just makes me a little more wary that something might be out there."*

Deborah Brown, who helps run Cornwood Cattery at West Rooke

Farm, said: "You can get some big domestic cats, but not bigger than an alsatian." Cat experts at Dartmoor Wildlife Park in Sparkwell believe there could be about 30 pumas roaming wild in the South West and 300 across the country. Senior keeper Robin Godbeer said: "If the latest sighting is a puma it is nothing out of the ordinary. "We know there are a lot around; most seem to be around the Wrangaton area." He claims wild pumas have been attracted to the wildlife park and added: "We have four females here and when they are in season their smell can be picked up by a male up to five miles away. *Plymouth Evening Herald*, 30.10.1999.

* In the middle of October breeder Judith Lapthorne decided to install security lights around a field on the edge of Dartmoor in an attempt to scare off a puma-like big cat which she believes was responsible for killing and eating one of her pedigree rams. Mrs Lapthorne, who rears 250 sheep from her farm at Smithaleigh, near Plympton, says she has seen the big cat. The remains of her 10-month-old ram were found in an orchard at Filham, near Ivybridge, where it had been grazing. It had severe bite wounds to the throat and face. Its carcass had been stripped down to the bone by an animal that was obviously hungry. A second prizewinning ram also died, probably as a result of stress, the day after the night-time attack.

"I've never seen anything like this before," said Mrs Lapthorne, who discovered the dead animal on Wednesday. She had kept 17 rams in the rented field and had checked

them the previous evening. The big cat gained access to the field either by jumping over a stone hedge topped with a fence - a barrier five to six feet high - or via a double set of gates across the entrance. Mrs Lapthorne will now place flashing lights around the field in an attempt to scare the predator away from the location. She has also told police of the attack.

"If it's a puma that's killed the sheep and filled its belly up, they think it's two or three days before they strike again." She believes the attack was the work of a big cat that has been roaming the South Hams countryside and has been spotted several times. *"I just can't see how a dog would get in this field. It's too difficult,"* she said. *"It has got to be something that has a strong mouth and is capable of breaking a neck to immobilise its prey. There was no struggle at all in the field."* Shortly before last Christmas, Mrs Lapthorne, 35, saw a big cat cross the road in front of her near Langage, Plympton. *"It had a tail about 3ft long. It was quite sleek. It jumped from the hedge into the road and across."* Earlier this year, a farm manager told her he had also seen a similar puma-like animal. At the end of September, her uncle reported seeing a similar beast, this time in woods between Ermington and Ivybridge. *Western Morning News, 17.10.1999.; Plymouth Evening Herald 16.10.99*

* Businessman Geoff Drew said he was "100% certain" that the beast he saw while driving home late at night was a

puma. Mr Drew was returning from a business trip at midnight in early October when he spotted the creature on the A30, about two miles from Okehampton. Watching it for about five seconds, Mr Drew said he got to within 15 feet of the cat before it disappeared into undergrowth by the side of the road. Mr Drew, who is from Torquay, said: *"There, in front of me, staring into the headlights was this big black cat. It was so supple and sleek. As I drove closer, it crept under a fence and disappeared."* The 45-year-old business consultant immediately telephoned his wife Jean on his mobile phone. The mystery animal was larger than a labrador dog and at least 4ft long, with a long tail of about 3ft, said Mr Drew. *"It stared back at me as if it was completely unconcerned by my presence. It wasn't at all startled,"* he said. *Western Morning News 15.10.99*

A high tech surveillance system set up in the Plymouth area has failed to capture the camera-shy big cats which have been reported in the area for years. Newquay Zoo boss Mike Thomas who last graced these pages a couple of years ago when his much touted video of a "hybrid cat" on Bodmin Moor looked to our reporter Paul Crowther suspiciously like a rather ordinary moggie installed £1,500 of electronic equipment at a top-secret location - said he expected to see the creature over the winter months because it is the mating season. Mike Thomas, was given cash to buy the

state-of-the-art equipment by South East Cornwall-based pastry firm Ginsters.

The company launched a 14oz pastry called The Beast of Bodmin last summer and is keen to learn more about big cat sightings near its Callington home. Cameras But since Mr Thomas set up the infra-red time-lapse cameras in August, he has failed to film the elusive big cat. "It has all been rabbits and foxes," he said. "But we now have two cameras set up at different locations which we move whenever we hear of a sighting and I expect to find something rock-solid soon."

The cameras will be on the move again shortly and will continue to be taken wherever reliable big cat sightings are made. *Plymouth Evening Herald* 14.10.99

UK: LEICESTERSHIRE

Fishery operator Roy Marlow of Peckleton in Leicestershire claims to have seen a big black cat at the beginning of September 1999 and at the end of October says he saw it a month ago and this week, found the remains of a 14lb carp apparently devoured by a big cat.

There could even be a Peckleton Puma as well. In contrast to Roy's big black. In the same area a 'biscuit' coloured big cat was spotted by an off-duty

police sergeant earlier in the year. In the last five years county man David Spencer has logged 250 reported sightings in Leicestershire and Rutland, after having his own close encounter he plots locations on the website www.bigcats.org.uk *Leicester Mercury* 23.10.99

* The so-called Beast of Rutland has been spotted frolicking in a Leicestershire cemetery Two sisters were putting flowers on a grave at Anstey Cemetery when they spotted the animal. He said: "They noticed this big black animal with a longish tail which they thought was a dog. Then it got up and they realised it was obviously a big cat. It took off at an incredible speed." *Leicester Mercury* 28.10.99

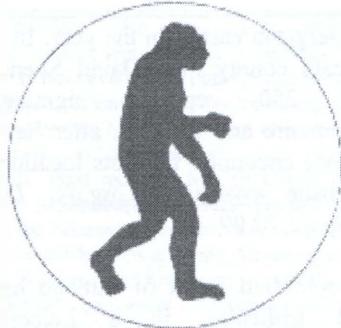
UK: SUFFOLK

Frightened pupils at an exclusive girls' school were told not to go out at night in October 1999 after a "big cat" was seen prowling near the grounds.

The beast is believed to have slaughtered a young calf after remains were found in a nearby field.

Paw marks have also been discovered in woodland next to St Felix School's playing field at Southwold, Suffolk. There have been more than a dozen sightings of the animal in recent weeks, sparking panic in the seaside town. It is described as sandy-coloured, the height of a labrador dog but with a sleeker body, a very long tail and big feet. *Daily Mirror* 22.10.99

BHM



NOT THE CHOCOLATE ONES.....

At Samhain 1999 members of the Australian Hominid Research Society started a new investigation into the mysterious yowie – the Australian man beast. Their spokesman Dean Harrison is a firm believer. He insists he has seen the "playful fellow" on several occasions, including once in bushland deep in the heart of the Blue Mountains, a mere 90-minute drive from Sydney. Mr Harrison and other members of the Australian Hominid Research Society hope to provide incontrovertible proof of the existence of the creature, which "witnesses" have described as "*an elephant on two legs*". Setting up a base camp near Coonabarabran in northwest New South Wales, where the yowie has also been spotted, Mr Harrison and his friends spent a week in search of the elusive animal. Equipped with night-vision video cameras, sound detectors and even an infra-red scope from a Russian tank, the group scoured scrubland in the

hope of producing photographic evidence. *South China Morning Post*
30.10.99

FIRST MONSTER OF THE MILLENIUM

The new millennium has started with a bang for cryptozoologists as two yetis have been sighted in the Malayan jungle. On the second of January Liong Chong, a villager from Kampung Chennah was inspecting his crops. He believed wild pigs had been raiding his durian (fruit tree) saplings. Suddenly he noticed a strange animal smell.

"My heart started pounding fast when I saw two mawas standing near the rubber trees as I feared they would attack me", said Mr Chong, 50. *"I was about 10 meters away from the two mawas and I had a clear view of them. One was about 1.83 meters tall with long, black and shiney hair all over its body. The other was shorter, about 1.52 meters tall with brownish hair"*, he added. The strange pair stared at Mr Chong before walking back into the jungle

The village is now abuzz with talk of the *mawas*, the local name for the yeti. Westerners wrongly think of the yeti as a white furred man-beast of the Himalayan snowline. In fact the yeti has brown or black fur and inhabits tropical and sub tropical forests. Only occasionally does it venture out of mountain valleys and above the snow

line The yeti is not new to the Malaysian rain forests. Sighting stretch back many years.

In 1979 three huge yetis some 3 meters tall were seen by students in Lumut and in 1966 18 inch foot prints were found near Segmat after a soldier reported a run in with a giant ape at night.

Many zoologists believe that the yeti is probably a surviving giant pre-historic ape known as *Gigantopithecus blacki* whose fossil remains have been found in India and China. In Asia today the yeti is reported from the former U.S.S.R, down through central China, the Himalayan mountains, and into Indonesia and Malaysia.

The last century brought us the discovery of such exciting animals as the Komodo dragon, the mountain gorilla, the coelacanth, and, within the last ten years, the Vu-Kwang ox. Will this century bring us the yeti?

EDITORIAL NOTE: THE RETURN OF THE 'PHONE IN QUIZ. This phone in quiz is especially aimed at Karl Shuker who will probably be the only one to know the answer because we don't ☺ However, if this sighting of the elusive Malayan BHM was the first monster sighting of the 21st Century then what

was the first such sighting from the turn of the 20th Century? Any ideas? The first person to phone in with either a convincing answer or at least a funny one will win an unspecified prize of goodies (probably an autographed copy of both of Jon's new books and a copy of the book *Weird Devon* by Jon, Richard and Graham which has just been published by Bossiney Books. Whoopee!!!

RETURN OF THE MAPINGUARI

Mr dos Santos had just shot four white-lipped peccaries near his home in the Brazilian Amazon when he heard it. The horrible soul-wrenching humanlike cry came from a tangle of vines about 50 metres away. "The moment you hear it, all your hairs stand on end," Mr dos Santos says. He dropped the peccary he was carving, grabbed the lianas he had cut to lash the carcass to his back and sprinted in the opposite direction, towards the nearby river. Mr dos Santos waited in the water for an hour or so until he felt safe going back for his peccaries. "I had just a knife and no shells and didn't want to face the creature," he explains.

No one relishes facing it - not Mr dos Santos or any other villager of Barra do Sao Manuel, a tiny settlement on the banks of the Tapajos River deep in the Brazilian Amazon, or anyone else in the vast rainforest. Covered in long red hair, standing more two metres

on its hind legs, emanating a stench so foul it repulses everyone in sniffing distance, the mapinguari is reputed to be the most terrifying denizen of the rainforest. It is said to avoid water in order to wander with herds of peccaries and to protect them, to forage at night, to twist huge palm trees apart with its massive claws so it can feast on the soft insides, to have backward-turned feet, and to be generally immune to bullets.

Australian Sunday Herald 31.10.99

NEW AND REDISCOVERED



Fundamentalist cryptozoologists have long been attacked by other branches of the discipline because to now so many of the icons of cryptozoology, especially those listed in Heuvelmans' seminal "On the Track of Unknown Animals" have singularly failed to be discovered. Now the Father of

Cryptozoology has been vindicated at last! The following headline appeared c/o Australian Broadcasting Company on the last day of March:

Scientists name new species of elephant
29 March 2000

Scientists believe they have proved the existence of a new species of elephant. They say the rare African forest elephant is sufficiently genetically different from its savannah-living cousin to be classed as a separate species alongside the Asian elephant. African forest elephants tend to be stockier than those living on the open savannahs and also have straighter tusks and rounder ears.

The differences have led some zoologists think the two are distinct species and evidence appearing to confirm the theory has come from Coco, an African forest elephant at Paris' Vincennes Zoo. Molecular biologists from the Natural History Museum in Paris tested DNA from Coco and preliminary results show it differs from those of savannah elephants as much as they do from an Asian elephants.

After over four decades it seems that Heuvelmans has at last been vindicated and one can only wonder which of his predictions will be proved true next!

OUT OF PLACE



A SENSE OF PORPOISE

Crowds queuing for the Millennium Wheel enjoyed an unusual sideshow in the form of a porpoise which found its way into the Thames.

People watched as the 4ft mammal popped its grey head out of the water, 20ft from the attraction.

Onlooker Pete Trotman said "*It looked a bit disorientated, no wonder it kept bobbing its head out.*" London Evening Standard 13.3.2000

EDITORIAL COMMENT: In recent issues we have carried pieces about the return of the otter to London's great river, and we well remember the media furore when salmon started to appear in The

Thames for the first time in over a century but as far as we know this is the first sighting of a cetacean in the river for many years.

However, as always we may be wrong. If anyone has any further information on this or other sightings of porpoises or indeed any cetacean in the Thames would they please contact us at the Editorial address.

EXTINCT OR WHAT?

The following story arrived at CFZ Mansions from our favourite blatherskite Dave "Daev" Walsh. It is undated and we print it in full.....

ONE of Europe's most striking wild animals, the Pyrenean ibex, has become extinct, in the first great conservation failure of the new century.

But there was a bathetic finale for the last of the wild mountain goats with magnificent trophy horns which Spanish hunters have remorselessly pursued: a tree fell on it. The last remaining animal, a thirteen year old female, was found dead in late February under a fallen tree in the remote Ordesa national park in the central Pyrenees.

EDITORIAL COMMENT: We have heard nothing else on this subject and would be interested in receiving more information from one of the CFZ readers or associates more familiar with the taxonomy of hooved mammals than the rest of the team.....

CFZ COMMUNICATIONS AND THE EXETER STRANGE PHENOMENA RESEARCH GROUP PRESENT THE FIRST EVER:



Confirmed speakers include:

- Emmet Sweeney: *"The Truth behind the Pyramids"*
Mike Hallowell *"The mystery of Marsden Grotto"*
Richard Freeman *"Dragons"*
David Farrant *"The Highgate Vampire"*
Nick Redfern *"The CIA and Noah's Ark"*
Malcolm Robinson *"UFOs and other strangeness from Scotland"*
Mark Norman: *"The Devil on Dartmoor"*
Jonathan Downes *"Mysterious appearances and disappearances"*
Chris Moiser *"The Mystery Big Cats of the Westcountry"*

Telephone 01392 424822 for details

SCAMP: THE ALTERNATIVE ANIMAL.

By

NICK REDFERN.

NOTE: In the previous issue of *Animals & Men*, Nick Redfern revealed that the U.S. Defence Intelligence Agency has taken a keen interest in telepathy and psychic abilities in animals for decades. Now, similar claims are being made for a revolutionary new alternative healing centre for animals in the West Midlands.

A revolutionary new centre has just opened in Wolverhampton that aims to provide alternative therapies and treatments for pets. The centre is the brainchild of Sue and John Bithell who decided to set it up after seeing the positive effect that therapies including herbs, magnets, massage and even telepathy had on their pet dog, Scamp, who had suffered two serious strokes over the course of several months.

States Sue: "*When Scamp had his first stroke he was wobbling on his feet and rolling to one side so we took him to the vets. He said that it was 54mply Scamp's age. He's seventeen now - or one hundred and nineteen in human years! There wasn't a great deal the vet could do other than give him something to help his circulation.*"



Scamp – the little dog who started it all

Pic © Nick Redfern

She continues: "*The second stroke he had we knew was more serious: his eyes were rolling and he was totally off his feet. We were scared to go back to the vet because we felt that he would talk us into having Scamp put to sleep. We felt that we would give Scamp the chance to show us over the next few days what direction he wanted to take.*"

Currently, Sue works as a reflexologist at the Centre for Natural Healing in Penn Road, Wolverhampton, and took Scamp to the centre to see if anything could be done for their little dog. In conjunction with healer

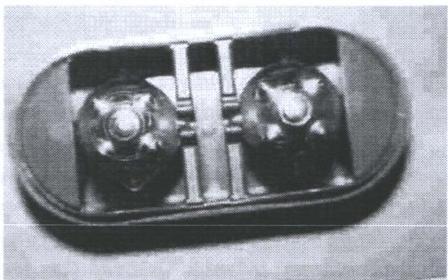
Linda Potter, Sue formulated a plan to help Scamp recover from his potentially life threatening strokes.



Sue Bithell with Scamp

Pic © Nick Redfern

"We started with herbs," Sue recalls, "and also gave him some massage therapy. We also introduced magnet therapy too."



One of the Magnets used in the new forms of therapy

Pic © Nick Redfern

Linda explains how the magnet therapy

works: "*Magnets act like a manager and bring the resources in the body to the places that they need to be. A lot of the blood is iron, so that improves the circulation and increases blood flow.*"

As the therapy progressed, Sue began to notice a remarkable change in her beloved pet: "*I stroked the magnets up and down his spine and felt a hot spot on a meridian line that progressed from the right side of his brain to his kidneys, and I realised that he must have been getting awful headaches. After half an hour he lifted his head and I knew I was getting a response. Over the next week and a half we used a combination of nutritional herbs and the magnet therapy - five or six times a day. On the seventh day he was back on his feet completely.*" Sue also agreed for Linda - a healer and a bachelor of education - to attempt to link her mind telepathically with that of Scamp whilst he was undergoing treatment. "*With telepathy,*" Linda explains, "*healers have to tune in; it's almost like a logging in process on a computer. If the subject has a physical problem, your hands can be directed to an area of the body; you might get a mental picture of what's going on; and sometimes it's an emotional link. With Scamp it was a combination. He was not a happy chap! He wanted to know why he couldn't get around properly. In working with him I got flashes of memories - it's as if you're remembering something but*

they're not your memories. And I got this picture of Scamp wanting a bowl of milk and some chicken." According to Sue, chicken and milk is Scamp's favourite snack!

Sue also states, with a smile:

"When John got into bed one night after Scamp had started his treatment, Scamp started to growl - so we knew that he was back to his old self and wanting to take his commanding role. He's like a puppy again now and wants to play all the time. In our opinion he's ninety-five per cent recovered."

To ensure that Scamp remains in good health he still undergoes a regime that includes massage and herbal remedies; and at night he sleeps on his very own magnetic 'pad'.



**Scamp and his owner;
now turned therapist!**

Pic © Nick Redfern

Now, with the opening of what will be known as Scamp's Pet Clinic in the grounds of the Centre for Natural Healing, Sue and John have high hopes for its success: *"We want to be able to offer people the opportunity for something other than the vet. I must stress that we don't advocate people not using their vet. We want people to use the vet for diagnosis and therapy and to use the therapy that they recommend. But we to give people the opportunity to use natural remedies as well."*

John adds: *"We can design a full nutritional programme for the animals and will offer herbs, vitamins and minerals where appropriate. And, of course, the magnets - which are very good for arthritic problems."*

And what are Sue and John's ultimate goals for Scamp's Pet Clinic?

"We want to help as many pets and people as we possibly can. If you can heal the animal you start to heal the owner as well, because they get stressed out too. It's an open door to allow people to make the decisions and the choices to treat their pets how they feel they best can."

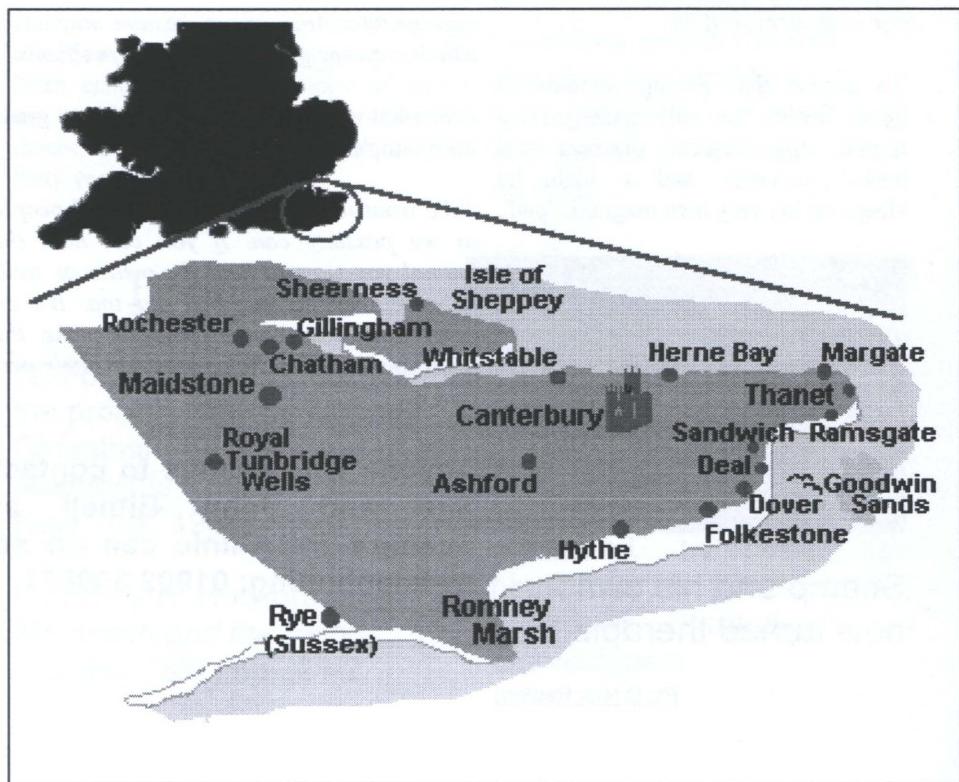
Anyone who wishes to contact Sue and John Bithell at Scamp's Pet Clinic can do so by telephoning: 01902 339877.

My Sighting Of One Of Kent's Mystery Cats

by

Neil Arnold

At 6:55pm on Wednesday 16th February 2000, my uncle Dean was driving along Capstone Road in Chatham, with his son Mark (Age 15) in the passenger seat. They were heading toward Elm Court Garden Centre to pick up a relative from work. The lane was dark and narrow, flanked by stretches of farmland and hedge-rows, and when other motorists were scarce Dean put his head-lights on full beam.



As they neared the Elm Court turn off on the right, the lights picked out a strange animal protruding from the left-handside undergrowth. for a few seconds Dean and Mark watched a dark brown, streamlined cat glare into the lights, its tight fur gleaming in the beam and its eyes shined brightly. The cat was slightly taller than a fox and certainly longer and in a matter of seconds it was gone.

Being a lone researcher in regards to Kent's mystery big cat population, it was not long before I found out about my relative's sighting. At around 9:15pm I'd heard the full account, phoned my father (who was at a friend's) and by 10:00 pm we were scouring the deep night and winding lanes. In pitch darkness and~fatefully without a torch (I was at my girlfriend's and due to the spontaneity of our actions we were not at all prepared for such a 'warm' sighting) my Dad drove us up and down one stretch of road, albeit suspiciously as if we were preparing a burglary:

EDITOR'S NOTE: if you had been pulled, Neil, it wouldn't have been the first time that someone in the CFZ posse had attracted the attention of the 'bules who thought that they were acting highly suspiciously when in fact they were only going about their cryptozoological business.....

At 10:40 pm we parked the car at Elm Court's entrance and were able to

view a field of sheep to our left and farmland on a bank to our right. The farmer who owns the land has seen a puma-type cat on three occasions in two years mooching around his sheep so such an appearance was not at all unusual.

I

After five or so minutes myself and my father noticed a presence near the farmers fenced in sheep. The car headlights were obstructed by a grassy bank and so the area was not illuminated, but on a muddy path dissecting the sheep pens we watched two glowing eyes spookily descend the slope. We could see no body or form and yet the eyes seemed to move on a graceful form which for around ten seconds floated down the path, around 70 yards away.

Although we only viewed two glowing eyes, we thought them to be unlike a fox. It was a weird moment, but we were determined that we would keep an open mind.

About five minutes later and after no reappearance of the eerie eyes, my dad decided to move the car, at a snail's pace down the road. On the right was the spot where my uncle had seen the large cat, to out left still the field of sheep, some 70 yards away.

As we rolled down the road about twenty yards I shouted:

"Over there, two eyes.".....

and I pointed left to the base of the sloping field. My dad never saw the eyes but as we approached I spotted a black shape against the grass some sixty feet away. Again the eyes glowed as it stared at us and then we seemed to lose sight of it.

With a grassy bank to our immediate left and a wire fence we drew up to a gap and again I saw the black 'mass' standing out against the dark field. We rolled passed it and then braked, gently we reversed and I said: "*There*", and only twenty feet away to our left sat a very dark coloured creature. At the foot of the field it peered up at the sheep which were only some thirty feet away.

My eyes struggled to adapt to the darkness as I attempted to focus on this 'thing'. It most certainly was not a fox. It sat over two-feet high as it stalked the grazing flock. It was at this point that I became disappointed by the fact that I never had my trusty torch; one flick of the switch would have revealed the true glory of this cat, but here I had to make do.

I wound the car window down and stuck my head out as my Dad peered at this silent predator and then I thought, '*To Hell with it!*' and I decided to get out of the car.

My eyes were still focused on this black beast and my Dad was opening his and looking over the roof of the car.

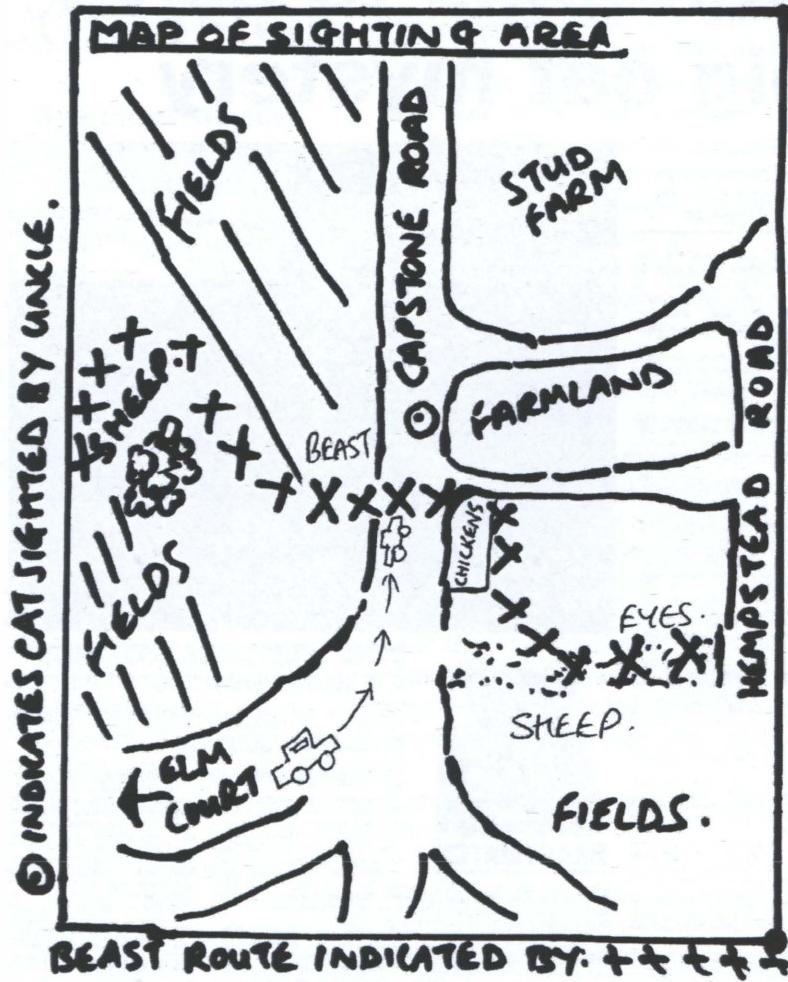
In the darkness, with the cat still in view I stepped up the grass bank and then, in a flash the animal took off at lightning speed toward the top of the slope. It seemed to reach the top in three phenomenal seconds, sprinting up past the sheep. My dad saw it turn left along the ridge, its dark form creeping behind the sheep, and then in one swift movement the whole flock of sheep quickly ran to the right, sensing the predatory presence behind them.

We lost sight of it in the darkness, leaving us mesmerized as if we'd encountered something from another world. All my research and investigations had paid off. Even more peculiar was the fact that only a month or so earlier I had abandoned all beast-connected work with radio, local press etc. and then I had my moment. I'd seen the black panther.

A few days later I spoke to the local farmer. On the Monday (14th) he'd found the leg of a sheep on his land and mentioned more sightings of mysterious felines.

I believe that I'll see one of these cats again, and maybe more than once but there is no way, despite such sightings that I will allow the Kent "cat flap" to be transformed into the media frenzy that was the furore surrounding the sightings of the 'beast' of Exmoor.

This is personal.



Neil aims to solve big cat mystery

File of evidence grows as he scours the countryside. By Geoff Maynard

IF you go down to the woods today you could be in for a big surprise — a chance encounter with some of the Medway Valley's most mysterious residents.

For there has been increasing countless sightings of big cats in the North Downs strip between Chatham and Maidstone over the past two years.

On most occasions people have simply stumbled across the animals in a chance encounter while out walking a dog or driving home at night.

But as yet nobody has been able to capture a big cat on film to conclusively prove their presence in the wilds of Kent.

Amateur photographer Harry Matthews snapped a picture of a cat in a field at Cooling, near Rochester in 1987 but experts said they could not be certain it was a wild animal.

One man who has made it his life's ambition to solve the big cat mystery is self styled beast hunter Neil Arnold, 28, of George Avenue, Walderslade.

In his spare time, Gillingham Business Park security worker Neil has compiled a portfolio of more than 300 sightings throughout Kent dating back to 1972.

Most sightings from the 70s and 80s came from the Canterbury/Betle area, but in recent years the beastly emphasis has moved.

A cluster of sightings have been recorded around Blue Bell Hill — giving rise to the name Blue Bell Hill Beast — and the Beoley area of Maidstone.

A beast appears to be using the dense woodland stretching from Boxley and Detling in the east to Burham and Woudham in the west.

Sightings have also been recorded on the other side of the River Medway in Cobham, Higham and Oxted.

So what exactly is going on in the countryside on our urban doorstep? Who better to ask than beast hunter Neil?

"What I can say with near certainty is that there is more than one cat living out there," he said. "If one is living anywhere it is in Boxley Woods. The woods from



BEASTWATCH

There links up with Detling, Burham and Blue Bell Hill and these mammals can travel up to 20 miles a night."

Neil believes there could be a big cat living around Boxley Wood, another at Blue Bell Hill and perhaps another in the Cobham area.

"It may have been a batch of rats that has grown up after being released from a private collection," he explained.

"They have now gone their separate ways as happens with big cats

LONELY SEARCH: Neil Arnold scours the countryside for clues to the beast and hopes to stumble across his quarry across his quarry himself

"They have managed to live largely out of sight in recent years," he added.

Neil reckons that most of the sightings are of a sandy-coloured puma or cougar and that people who have reported a black panther may have been deceived by its colour when seeing it in the half-light or darkness.

The cluster of big black cat sightings around Blue Bell Hill, however, could suggest that there is a panther living in that area.

The search for clues has seen Neil stumble across animal carcasses, sometimes right in the open, big rats, large deer prints at Blue Bell Hill and Capelton Country Park in Chatham, and can glow marks on a tree.

Findings of dead animals are not common but Neil is not surprised and does not believe that disappearances breed the legends.

"There does seem to be a lack of animal kills reported but I know for a fact that a lot of farmers don't like talking to the authorities about them," he said.

Neil carries out most of his site visits at weekends after interview-

ing the people who have reported a sighting.

After an examination of the surrounding areas for signs of a big cat presence, he takes a picture and logs the information in his ever-growing file.

The search is often lonely and a little frustrating.

"I went to follow up a sighting in Detling and was soon lobbing stones into the undergrowth to see if there was anything there and this fox jumped out — I was absolutely terrified," he said. "I have also tried to get down into the woods at Boxley Wood — there is a feeling in the air around there which is rather eerie."

One day he hopes he will achieve his ultimate goal and stumble across his quarry himself.

"It would be my dream to catch it on film," he said. "I'm not interested in making money out of it. If I could see it as part of my catalogue of sightings on a bookshelf I would be pleased."

Can you help Neil achieve his dream? If you have spotted the beast contact Neil on 01634 322572 or Kent Today on 01634 829999.

Neil Arnold: On the Track of Unknown Animals (to coin a phrase)

THE WURM TURNS: A SUGGESTED EXPLANATION FOR THE TATZELWURM

By Richard Freeman

In the Alpine mountains of Austria, Bavaria, and Switzerland a strange reptilian animal is occasionally reported. It is described as a cylindrical, scaly animal with a blunt head and powerful jaws. Its legs are greatly reduced and some say it sports only a front pair of limbs. It grows to some 90 cm (3 feet) in length and is greatly feared on account of its aggressive nature. It is believed to have a bite so venomous that it can kill a cow and can even breath out poisonous gas. It is known variously as the *Tatzelwurm* (worm with feet), the *Springwurm* (jumping worm), and the *Stollerwurm* (tunnel worm). For clarity I shall stick with the former name.

The creature's existence was excepted as fact in the Alps and it appeared in several books on Alpine natural history and hunting along side more familiar animals. Swiss naturalist Friedrich von Tschundi was convinced of the reality of the creature and wrote in 1861...

"In Bernese Oberland and the Jura the belief is widespread that there exists a sort of "cave worm" which is thick, 30 to 90 cm long and has two short legs ; it appears at the approach of storms after a long dry spell..."

"In 1828 a peasant in the Solothurn canton found one in a dried-up marsh and put it aside intending to take it to professor Hugi. But in the meantime the crows ate half of it. The skeleton was taken to the town of Solothurn, where they could not decide what it was and sent it to Heidelberg-where all trace of it was lost"

Cryptozoological evidence has a habit of going awry on transportation.

In 1903 the Austrian Privy Councillor A. von Drasenovich was told by a close friend of an attack by the *Tatzelwurm*. The man, a professional hunter was at an altitude of 1500 meters near Murau in Steiermark when he encountered the beast. It resembled a grotesque worm 50 cm long by 8 cm thick, with four stubby legs. As he approached the monster leapt at his face. He slashed at it with his knife in self defence but the blade could not penetrate its thick scales. The brute made six of these spectacular leaps at the man before retreating into a crack in some rocks and disappearing.

A poacher and herdsman was hunting on Hochfilzenalm mountain in the south of Austria when he saw a *Tatzelwurm* 90cm (3 feet) long, with two short legs, and as thick as a man's arm basking on some rocks. The hunter raised his rifle to shoot it but the animal made a huge arcing leap at him. At this point he took to his heels.

Three years later two travellers in the Mur valley came upon a singular carcass. It seemed to be a partial skeleton of a huge lizard around 120 cm (4 feet) long. The pair had the presence of mind to show the corpse to a local veterinary student. The student identified it as the remains of a roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*). The finders were not convinced by his conclusions but once again the bones went missing.

Two years later in exactly the same spot a young shepherd saw a giant lizard that so scared him he refused to work there for the whole summer.

In the 1930s Dr Gerhard Venzmer and Hans Fulcher collected the evidence of 60 witnesses. All agreed it was 30 to 60 cm (1 to 2 feet) long, cylindrical in shape with the tail ending abruptly. It had a large blunt head that grew directly into the body with no narrowing in the neck area. The eyes were large and the body scaled. It hissed like a snake.

There have been sightings further south in Europe as well. Similar creatures have been reported from France . In Ossum a woman encountered one whilst picking berries in 1939. Roger Hutchins heard talk

of such reptiles whilst living in Province in the mid 60s. The older people referred to the creature as "Arasas" others called it "Le Gros" (the big one). Most people claim to have seen it. Those with a rural existence such as shepherds and truffle gatherers were very familiar with it. They retorted that it was seen basking close to holes or clefts in rocks. If disturbed it would quickly retreat into its lair. The descriptions fit exactly to those given by witnesses further north.

Farmers in Palermo, Sicily reported a snake like creature with a cat like head and two short legs, attacking pigs in 1954. The cat's head seems at odds with other reports but perhaps this was in reference to its large eyes. Maybe the Siracuse animal mentioned earlier was of the same species.

Strangely there is a report of what sounds very like a *Tatzelwurm* from Denmark in June 1973!. A strange "snake" was reported from the Ulushale forest on Mon Island. It was described as 4 and a half feet long, with a dark back, light underside and a "nasty" head. A description fitting our monster.

So, if it exists , what is the *Tatzelwurm*? There are several candidates. The ones that spring to mind most readily are the skinks. These are a group of elongated lizards. Most are tubular in shape and some resembling animated salamis! Many

have greatly reduced or even vestigial limbs. One type *Chalcides striatus* dwells in the French maritime Alps and can reach 60 cm (2 feet). This species is quite slender in build however.

The largest species is the monkey tailed skink (*Corucia zebra*) of the Soloman Islands. It can grow to around 75 cm (2 and a half) and with its heavy scales and blunt head it resembles the *Tatzelwurm* in passing. Could an even larger skink with much reduced limbs exist in the Alps?

Another possibility is that the *Tatzelwurm* is related to the European legless lizard (*Opisaurus apodus*) a large powerful legless lizard closely related to the slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*). It can grow to almost 90 cm (4 feet) long and can inflict a mighty (but not venomous) bite. Most become hand tame in captivity but a wild specimen will, if annoyed hiss, rear, thrash, and savagely bite. This aggressive behaviour is reminiscent of the *Tatzelwurm*. The glass snake's range is south east Europe and south west Asia. Perhaps our beast could be a stouter north European relative of the legless lizard.

The deadly venom attributed to the *Tatzelwurm* may very well be folkloric much like the capabilities attributed to the salamander. But there are genuine venomous lizards.

The Mexican beaded lizard (*Heloderma horridum*) and the gila monster (*Heloderma suspectum*) both have a poisonous bite. The venom is painful but not usually fatal to humans. The Alpine horror may indeed be a giant lizard with a toxic bite, probably the continent's largest reptile.

The *Tatzelwurm* may be something other than a reptile. An Austrian schoolmaster who came across one in 1929 whilst exploring a cave on the Tempelmauer believed it to be a giant salamander.

"I started to look for the entrance to the cave. Suddenly I saw a snake like animal sprawled on the rotting foliage that covered the ground.. Its skin was almost white, not covered by scales but smooth. The head was flat and two very short feet on the fore part of the body were visible. It did not move but kept staring at me with its remarkably large eyes. I know every one of our animals at first glance and knew that I faced one that is unknown to science the Tatzelwurm. Excited, joyful, but at the same time somewhat fearful, I tried to grab the animal but I was too late. With the agility of a lizard the animal disappeared into a hole and all my efforts to find it were in vain. I am certain that it was not my imagination that let me see the animal but that I observed with a clear head."

"My" Tatzelwurm did not have large claws but short and atrophied looking feet; his length did not exceed 40 or 45 centimetres. Most probably the Tatzelwurm is a rare variety of salamander living in moist caves and only rarely coming to the light of day

There are aquatic amphibians with only two legs. The siren (*Siren lacertina*) of the south east U.S is one such creature. Others have a pallid hue, such as the blind cave dwelling olm (*Proteus anguinus*) of south eastern Europe. Both of these animals sport feathery external gills, a feature notably lacking in the schoolmaster's description. The white skin and troglodyte existence does suggest that what this man saw was some unknown cave dwelling salamander. The large eyes are somewhat out of character. Creatures evolved for a cave existence usually have atrophied or even absent eyes. Perhaps the milky hide was due to albinism.

There is another (admittedly somewhat vague) possibility as to the *Tatzelwurm*'s identity. This theory all hinges around a remarkable photograph taken in 1924 by a Swiss Photographer called Balkin. He was photographing scenery around the Meiringen area when he took a snap of what he thought was a rotten log. As he pressed the shutter the stump sprang into life and revealed itself to be a large angry lizard. The alarmed man fled but later had the snap developed. It showed a blunt headed heavy scaled animal head on to the camera. A soon as I saw the picture it immediately brought to mind the Australian lungfish (*Neoceratodus forsteri*). Of course the photo may be a fake, nothing more than a carved model. But if it is genuine the resemblance to the lungfish is very striking.

Lungfish (*dipnoans*) are a bizarre group of fish. Their air bladders are modified to act as lungs that allow them to gulp air. This is a distinct advantage in times of drought. The South American and African species can also aestivate in periods of hardship. The former burrows into mud tunnels the latter builds a "cocoon" of mud about itself.

There are six species, four from Africa, one from South America, and one from Australia. The latter species bears a strong resemblance to the archaic lobe finned fish first crawled onto land in the late Devonian era (408 to 360 million years ago) to give rise to the amphibians.

All known lungfish are tropical but could there be a distant relative adapted for temperate climes? An amphibious, bulky fish with a powerful bite. Hibernating in winter and inhabiting remote pools and caves. The tubular body and thick scales giving it a reptilian appearance. Perhaps this kind spends more time on land like a mudskipper (*Periophthalmus sp*) and with better developed eyes. We will never know for sure until someone takes up the challenge of solving this cryptozoological mystery which for those of us living in Europe at least is literally on our doorstep.



Is this 1924 photograph by Balkin, a fake or as Richard Freeman tentatively suggests, a rare picture of a new species of lungfish?

THE KOTA MAMA EXPEDITION

Interim Report

By Col. John Blashford-Snell



On the 7 October the boats of the Kota Mama expedition successfully completed their 1000-mile journey over the Andes and 1 800-mile voyage by river from Bolivia to Buenos Aires. The fleet of two traditionally built reed boats, a remarkably tough Avon inflatable and a Bolivian Navy support ship reached Buenos Aires in fine form. The reed boats were designed and constructed by skilled Aymara boat builders on Lake Titicaca in Bolivia. Flying the Red Ensign and the flags of Argentina, Bolivia and Paraguay, they were surely the first reed built craft to do this journey for many centuries.

The aim of the voyage was to show that boats of this type could have been

used by the ancient people of South America to navigate to the Atlantic and also to study the area for future scientific exploration. Using the current and sails whenever the wind permitted, the boats were on the river for 70 days. They encountered several ferocious storms with force 6 wind and white-topped waves up to 4 feet high.

Contrary to prediction, the wind was often from the South, bringing bitterly cold temperatures as low as 30 from Patagonia. This necessitated the Avon tender fitted with a Suzuki outboard being used to push the boats so that the schedule of scientific work and community aid could be maintained. A small Mariner outboard was fitted to the 13.5 metre flagship 'Kota Mama II' for steering in emergencies when avoiding the large barges that frequent the water-way. The use of modern propulsion did not worry the organizers, as the really important matter was to test the construction and fabric of the hulls.

The reed boats have performed remarkably well and proved to be extremely robust' commented

veteran explorer, Captain Jim All along the route scientific and Masters. However, they did suffer community aid projects have been some damage. Severe winds split carried out. Archaeological sites have the sails on two occasions and the been examined and an ancient fortress steering oar transom was broken dating back 2,500 years was found and when" Kota Mama II" was flung partially excavated in the Bolivian against the Bolivian Navy support Andes foothills. Petroglyphs thought by vessel by the wake of a passing some to be of Scandinavian origin were ship. In the final week, heavy examined in Eastern Paraguay, but waves swept away part of the although they are mysterious, the outer layer of reeds from the bow. expedition's archaeologist, Andrew Lesser damage has been caused to Millar, did not consider them the work of Vikings. The life and culture of some the 6 metre " Viracocha -Spirit of extremely interesting tribes were the Bahamas". Both craft are still recorded by the anthropological team in good order and now lie with under Shaun Linsley. Throughout the their striking figureheads, a jaguar expedition, biologist Jennifer Sambrook on "Kota Mama II" and a puma catalogued the fauna and directed a on" Viracocha" gazing proudly survey of the wildlife. from their bows.

In the Pantanal swamps of Brazil, snakes tried to climb aboard and cows tried to eat the boats. Mosquitoes plagued the crews in the early days when the temperature soared to 108°F but towards the end of the voyage it was too cold for insects. To keep intruders (and cows) away from the fleet the team had a mascot - 'Rocket', a hairy, ginger, Paraguayan piglet, who became much loved and was given to a good home in Asuncion.

In the swamps of NE Argentina, 57 endangered marsh deer were located using microlight aircraft. A hydrographic project was carried out by Lieutenant Carlos Cespedes of the Bolivian Navy, who is producing the first navigation guide to this great waterway. The Community Aid programme has been much appreciated. Working in a temperature down to -20~ at an altitude of 13000 feet, Royal Engineers officers designed flood prevention measures for a remote village in the Bolivian Altiplano. Throughout the project two British dentists extracted over 1400 teeth from poor people in

Hopefully he has not been eaten!

need of help whilst Doctor Noel Towage and Marine Burrell gave medical assistance to Transportation, who kindly hundreds of patients in Bolivia and sponsored the flagship Paraguay.

The expedition's website has proved most popular worldwide. Pictures taken with an Olympus digital camera have been a vital aid. Some 179000 visits per day have been recorded and over 3 million people have seen the site. School children in South America have been linked to pupils at schools in Europe via the BT Mobicue satellite phones used by the expedition for external communication. The lap top computers kindly provided by Sight and Sound performed faultlessly and provided the vital email facility. Thanks to Motorola and London Communications the expedition also had excellent short-range communications. The 50 members of the team included 9 women and came from Argentina, Australia, the Bahamas, Bolivia, Britain, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Gibraltar and Paraguay. The project was strongly supported by the Argentinean Prefectura Naval, the Bolivian and Paraguayan Navies and the Scientific Exploration Society. Many companies backed the venture, including American Airlines and JP Knight

This year's expedition follows an equally successful, but shorter voyage in Bolivia last year. Encouraged by the results of the two expeditions, the Bolivian National Academy of Science and the Bolivian Navy Hydrographic Department have suggested a series of new expeditions which will be undertaken in the coming 5 years. To learn more, a video of the first phase of the expedition that took place in Bolivia in 1998 is available. and another is being produced on the 1999 phase. A book of the expedition, written by historian Richard Snailham and John Blashford-Snell is being published by Headline next year.

For details of SES Global Expeditions please contact Melissa Dice at Expedition Base:

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WORLDS IN COLLISION

By Emmet Sweeney

Whatever the merits or otherwise of the asteroid impact theory as an explanation for the death of the dinosaurs, there exists abundant evidence for a much more recent cataclysmic upheaval of nature - one which occurred just a few thousand years ago and is recorded in the folk memory and traditions of humanity.

That at least was the opinion of most of the scientific community until the final years of the last century, when Charles Lyell's theory of "uniformitarianism" (as opposed the hitherto prevalent "catastrophism") gained the upper hand. But the idea that world-wide catastrophes had disrupted the earth was not rejected for lack of evidence. Quite the contrary. The rejection of catastrophism, it seems, had much more to do with socio-political conditions of the time, as well as the notion of progress then prevailing amongst the European intelligentsia.

Although catastrophism fell into disfavour with mainstream academia,

a small number of scholars continued to call attention to various anomalous facts that stubbornly refused to be explained in uniformitarian terms. The most important work of this type was that of Immanuel Velikovsky, whose earliest books *Worlds in Collision* (1950) and *Earth in Upheaval* (1956) ignited a controversy as rancorous as anything seen in the entire history of science. Velikovsky's work aroused the wrath of the academic establishment, and his ideas were censored so effectively that in spite of his books being best-sellers in the '50s, few of the public in the '90s have ever heard of him.

What I wish to do in the present article is review just a tiny sample of the truly enormous body of evidence presented by Velikovsky to support his major contention; that the earth was devastated throughout its history by cataclysmic upheavals of nature; that these disasters were the result of major planetary disruptions within the solar system; and that the final series of these events, which he said occurred just thirty centuries ago, resulted in the last great mass extinction known to palaeontology.

Let's first consider the question of extinctions.

One of the greatest mass extinctions in earth's history occurred at the end of the Pleistocene. Hundreds of species, on every continent, well adapted for survival in their native environments, disappeared forever. Among the best-known of these perhaps are the mammoth, woolly rhino, and sabre-

toothed tiger. Huge herds of these and other extinct animals wandered throughout North America, Europe, and Asia. Their disappearance, when discussed at all, is normally explained as being gradual, and is linked to the onset of the last Ice Age. Yet such an explanation flies in the face of a number of very well-known facts which are nevertheless studiously omitted from most of the geology and natural history textbooks.

To begin with, an Ice Age, as Velikovsky demonstrated in *Earth in Upheaval*, simply could not be the agent of destruction. If, as is believed, the Polar ice-caps expanded gradually over a number of decades, the herds would simply have retreated southwards before them. Then, at the end of the cold period, they would have reoccupied their former territories in the north.⁽¹⁾ Nor do the actual circumstances in which the extinct animals are found point in any sense to an Ice Age.

In *Earth in Upheaval* Velikovsky noted that throughout many regions of the far north, in Siberia, Alaska, and Canada, the bodies of vast numbers of animals, of species both extinct and extant, are found frozen in the permafrost, just a few feet beneath the surface. These creatures tend to be dismembered, and most have almost every bone in their bodies broken. Often however flesh and fur is intact. Whole hecatombs of such beasts are found in wildly confused settings. Animals which

would never associate in life, carnivores and herbivores, land and marine creatures, native fauna of America, Africa, and Asia, are found heaped on top of each other, and their bodies intermingled with uprooted and smashed trees, along with other types of debris. In some areas, such as the muck-flats of Alaska, these deposits are up to fifty metres in depth. Indeed, some of the islands of the Arctic Ocean seem to be composed almost entirely of this material.⁽²⁾

So plentiful were the visible remains of mammoths in Siberia during the last century that a flourishing trade in mammoth ivory developed; and in fact much of the ivory used in Europe a hundred years ago for piano keys etc. came not from Africa, but from the "Ivory Mines" of northern Russia. Some of the Siberian mammoths are so well preserved that their flesh can still be eaten, whilst a number have been shown to have traces of undigested buttercups and other flowering plants in their mouths and stomachs.⁽³⁾

This is a fact of great importance, and its failure to be taken into consideration is an outstanding omission on the part of natural historians. These animals were evidently grazing, in summer temperatures, when their bodies were

transported, with great speed and violence, into the Polar regions, and there deposited along with vast numbers of other animals, uprooted trees, and debris of every kind. Early European explorers were in no doubt that giant tidal waves, named "waves of translation" were the only things that could uproot whole herds of animals, as well as forests, and leave them within hours in the permafrost⁽⁴⁾

In vain will the modern student of geology or palaeontology search the textbooks for an honest appraisal of the mammoth problem. It is either ignored or brushed aside in a few pat sentences. Instead of floods he will read of Ice Ages. Instead of sudden destruction, he will read of gradual extinction. Yet the evidence would imply that Ice Ages are a textbook creation, whose purpose was to explain in an acceptable uniformitarian way the very clear evidence of nature's violence in every corner of the globe.

Thus classic "glacial" features, such as moraines and drumlins, are more satisfactorily explained as flood deposits.⁽⁵⁾ Erratic boulders are better explained by tidal waves than glaciers, whilst the "drift", the clay deposit covering much of the planet, which we find thoroughly mixed with ocean-rounded rocks and pebbles, can be accounted for only through the action flood-waters.

The entire planet, Velikovsky argued, bears witness to nature's recent violence. The bones of whales have been found in the middle of continents. Fish have been found frozen in the Antarctic ice-cap⁽⁶⁾ A frozen seal was found at an altitude of over a thousand feet in South Georgia. But the most compelling and certainly the most illuminating evidence, in terms of identifying the nature of this cataclysm, comes from the field of geology and plate tectonics.

During his famous voyage, Darwin noted a raised beach, at an altitude of three thousand feet, along the western rim of the Andes Mountains. This beach, complete with sand, shells, and shingle, runs the whole length of the South American continent. No other beaches are observed between this and the present beach at sea-level.

This is a fact as significant as the flowering plants in the mammoths' mouths. If, as conventional geology now insists, mountain ranges were raised very gradually over millions of years, with each movement of the earth's plates nudging the land up a few inches or feet, then there should be numerous beaches between sea-level and the raised beach. No such intermediate beaches exist! The conclusion is inescapable: the Andes must have been raised three thousand feet within a very short period of time; within weeks, days, or perhaps even hours!

Darwin himself was well aware of the implications of what he observed. To account for such rapid mountain-building, he noted "we must shake the entire framework of the globe".

What event, asked Velikovsky, could shake the globe, push mountain ranges up thousands of feet overnight, send giant waves over continents, and kill to the last specimen hundreds of species of animals?

This is a question pondered by scholars since the very beginnings of the sciences of geology and palaeontology. Georges Cuvier, the French founder of palaeontology, suggested an extra-terrestrial agent: And indeed the idea that a comet caused a great disaster on the earth had a long pedigree. During the 19th century the theory was revived by the American Congressman Ignatius Donnelly, whose two publications *Atlantis* and *Ragnarok; the Age of Ice and Fire* caused great excitement at the time.

In common with Donnelly, Velikovsky regarded the earth's encounter with the comet as a comparatively recent event, and insisted that virtually all of human mythology, legend, custom, and tradition, relates back to this cataclysm, a disaster he placed only 3,500 years ago. It was then, he said, that most of the Pleistocene creatures died. In defence of this dating Velikovsky relied chiefly upon human tradition from throughout the globe. Thus for example in *Worlds in Collision* he noted that the natives of South America had actually witnessed the titanic uplifting of the Andes indicated by the geological evidence. An Inca legend told how in the remote time of the ancestors the world went dark for a space of nine days. At the end of this period a great roaring sound was heard, and a light was seen in the distance. As the light grew closer however

men saw that it was the crest of a gigantic wave. Everyone would have died but for the fact that the mountains under their feet rose above the level of the ravaging waves.⁽⁷⁾

In *Worlds in Collision*, and in subsequent publications, Velikovsky quoted literally hundreds of ancient traditions from throughout the globe, which identified the destructive comet with the ubiquitous Cosmic Serpent, or Dragon monster. Invariably, this is the beast that breathes fire and brimstone on the earth and causes the earth to be devastated by fire and water.

Yet this comet, said Velikovsky, was not of the tiny variety (such as Hale Bop) that we commonly witness in the modern skies. The head of the comet, named Typhon by Plane and described as a ball of fire, was, said Velikovsky, planet-sized. As it came on its closest approach to earth, its gravitational pull shook our planet off its axis, raised mountain-high tidal waves, and ignited violent seismic activity throughout the globe. As the oceans' waves transgressed over the continents, the earth's plates buckled, raising mountains thousands of feet in some places, and sending land-masses into the depths of the sea in others.

The scenario presented in *Worlds in Collision* is certainly dramatic; and in retrospect the book could scarcely have been expected to cause anything but controversy. We are raised on the

belief that the solar system has been more or less unchanged for thousands of millions of years. Velikovsky speaks of a time, within the collective memory of mankind, when chaos not order reigned in the heavens, when the members of the solar system could not be relied upon to maintain their accustomed paths through the firmament.

All the inner planets, he said, including Mercury, Venus, Earth and Mars, experienced near-collisions with other planets only thirty centuries ago. On the strength of this hypothesis he predicted that all these bodies would display clear evidence of their recent violent past.

All of them, he said, would be volcanically active and would be pock-marked with impact craters. He further predicted that electromagnetism would be found to play an important part in the solar system, and that most of the planets, as well as the sun, would possess powerful electromagnetic fields.

If the truth of a scientific hypothesis is judged on its ability to generate accurate predictions, then Velikovsky certainly seems to have been onto something: for the exploration of space by the Americans and Russians since the 1950s has proved him, astonishingly enough, to be right in virtually every prognostication.

The moon, which in 1950 scientists

believed to be a dead world in every sense, was shown to have, just as Velikovsky said it would, a molten core, seismic activity, and remnant magnetism in the rocks.

Venus, which most scientists in 1950 felt might have an earth-like environment and even support life, but which Velikovsky said was a ball of fire only 3,500 years ago, was found in the 1970s to have a surface temperature almost hot enough to melt copper.

Mars, as Velikovsky predicted, was pock-marked with impact craters, had a molten core and active vulcanism. None of this was expected in 1950.

Jupiter, said Velikovsky, would be found to possess a powerful electromagnetic field, and, as it had recently experienced nuclear fusion, would be found to emit radio signals. Right again on both counts.

The sun, said Velikovsky, would be found to possess a vast electromagnetic field. This was totally unsuspected in 1950. Once again, Velikovsky was right.

One might expect that a thinker who could advance so many accurate predictions (and the above list is far from exhaustive) would be lauded as a genius. Yet in Velikovsky's case the opposite happened. When mentioned at all, he is derided as a crank. Nor was he given official priority for any of the discoveries which he was first to point to.

True, no one attempts any more to prevent the publication of his work.

Official silence has been found to be a better strategy. But why the almost pathological hostility aroused by this man's work; why also the virtual state of denial into which scientists place themselves when asked to consider the evidence - a small sample of which we have looked at here?

Certainly Velikovsky was treading upon many scholarly egos and reputations, and certainly if even a small percentage of what he said is right virtually every scientific and historical textbook will have to be rewritten.

But not even that can explain this most effective and very real cover-up of the 20th century, the psychology of which has been the subject of numerous doctoral theses, books and articles over the past forty years.

(3) J.A. Sutcliffe *On the Track of the Ice Age*
Mammoths New York, 1955)
p.115

(4) Discussed in detail by Velikovsky in *Earth in Upheaval* (1956)

(5) See eg. Charles Ginenthal "The Flood" *The Velikoyskian: A Journal of Myth, History and Science* Vol.11 No.4 (1994) pp.19-24
Ginenthal points out that drumlins are stratified into quite separate layers of sand and gravel. Only water can do that.

Footnotes:

(1) For a detailed discussion of the problem see eg. Charles Ginenthal *The Extinction of the Mammoths* New York, 1997)

(2) Henry H. Horworth *The Mammoth and the Flood* (London, 1887) pp.321-2

(6) D.L. Dineley and P.A. Garrett "Whale Remains in Glacier Ice" *Nature* 183 (1 959);272 (7) Velikovsky *Worlds in Collision* (1950)

(8) Perhaps the best account of the controversy is presented by Velikovsky himself in his posthumously published *Stargazers and Gravediggers*

BIG BIRDS AND OUT OF PLACE QUADRUPEDS

Terry Hooper

I would like to begin this article by looking at my own personal "Big Bird" sightings.

The first goes back to around 1966 (as accurate as I can be I'm afraid) I was living at my aunt's farm in a little village called Dalborn which is close to the former garrison town of Detmold, part of the old estate of Lippe, Germany. On this particular sunny afternoon I was larking around in a sandpit with my cousin Gerhard. The sky was clear and it was quite warm as the free-ranging chickens and cockerel pecked around the farmyard. Suddenly, the chickens began to scatter like crazy and my cousin shouted out "falke!" (hawk). Then the biggest shadow we'd ever seen swept over us, the farmyard and chicken. Looking up we saw what was obviously a golden eagle some thirty feet above the ground and it was the biggest thing we had ever seen. It moved overhead and toward the dense forest area at the back of the farm's orchard. Gerhard and I stared at each other and ran into the house and didn't venture out for the rest of the day.

Okay, you might say that two young kids saw a big bird and panicked and even overestimated the bird's size. Well, yes, we did panic but we were *country* boys used to wild life and certainly never panicked when we came across wild boar. We were also good at measuring distances. Later in the day, after we could find no one to believe that such a big bird existed we went to our Grandmothers house and she had a 6 feet high fridge-freezer. Even this was not tall enough to cover the bird's wingspan which must have been at the very least 8-9 feet!

Now, near to Detmold is the famous Adlerpark (Eagle Park) with an amazing number of hawks, eagles and other birds. No bird at that time matched this bird for size. I can quite believe that people would think that a bird of this size could grab and fly away with a child. My next sighting of a "Big Bird" was around the winter of 1975 when I was living on a caravan site on the outskirts of Ramsgate just off the Canterbury Road.

It was around nine p.m and the sky was star and moon lit and the visibility was very good I sensed something and looked up and then ducked very quickly thinking that what I saw out of the corner of my eye was a glider. To vindicate this rather unusual reaction I ought to explain that RAF Manston is not too far away and there had been three instances of light aircraft gliding in for various reasons and on one other occasion a glider was flown at night. When I get to knew the people there I understood that some rather "unusual" activity took place there at night. It was only when I looked up that I realised this object

was an enormous owl some 15 feet above the ground and heading into Ramsgate itself. I know the European Eagle Owl (*Bubo bubo*) and can only assume that this is what I saw even if my estimate of wingspan at 7 feet seems excessive but it was that close. The only problem being that the moon-lit sky showed the bird only as a dark silhouette. Those are my two, er, "close encounters" with "Big birds". Make of them what you will. The first of the out-of-place quadrupeds, comes from a gentleman who wrote to me concerning big cats in the United Kingdom. The man (KBH) ended his letter with

"...this is only the second out of place animal I have seen; the other being in South Africa when I saw a large wolf-like animal near Pietermaritzburg."

I could have ignored that last sentence but as one of my interests happens to be large canids I couldn't. I wrote back to KBH and got the following reply:-

"The animal I saw in South Africa was in 1975...I saw it at Mpumalanga about 10 miles south of Pietermaritzburg and on the old Durban road. I recall that it was unusual even by African standards. I was with our then dog, Penny, a large aggressive animal at the time. I returned home and armed myself with a .25 Browning pistol and went back but it had gone, probably a stroke of luck as a .25 is no match for a large fierce animal"

KBH continued;

"The animal was wolf-like but NOT the Abyssinian Wolf as I have seen pictures of this animal in an old issue of "Geographical" magazine."

Fortean researcher Loren Coleman has noted the existence of hyena in the United States so why not a wolf in South Africa? This was obviously an escapee unless South Africa's equivalent of our big cat sightings are large canids? And if the United States can have hyena and South Africa wolves why can't good old England have hyena? Here I offer such instances for what they are worth.

During 1998 a young man by the name of Peter phoned regarding big cats (not unusual if you run a national body like the Exotic Animals Register looking into these sightings) and we got into conversation about wild life in general. It was this conversation that solicited the following. Peter had been training with Social Services and one of the lectures concerned high rise tower blocks and problems with people living in them. A case in point was that of a man who had purchased a "cross-bred" dog from a man in a public bar. Neighbours began to complain about the noise and the smell and Social Services were eventually involved along with the RSPCA. All concerned stared in disbelief at the "cross-bred" when they gained entry to the flat in question. Despite all their attempts the man protested that they didn't know what they were talking about and that the dog was his only companion. It was, in fact,

a hyena! Of course, I felt this was a joke but Peter mentioned that a film was shown and included a photo of this animal. Peter has no idea what happened to this hyena but I got straight to work. I spoke to several people at the Social Services office in question and there were negative responses until I spoke to a woman who replied: "*Oh, that thing. Ugly, isn't it?*" I pointed out that I had not seen the animal in question but if it was a hyena I didn't think they were ugly: As it stands this contact is trying to get a copy of the film or video and details. I shall, of course, let everyone know if I get a copy.

This brings me to Pauline. A woman of mature years and well versed in wildlife and country matters. I have spoken to Pauline for nearly four hours and cannot fault her knowledge or observational skills. Quite casually midway in a conversation she told me:

"I saw what I think was a spotted hyena near Bristol once". I had the mental image of a north English hyena moving south to a better climate ("its reet waarm in 't south compared wee north"). Naturally, I asked Pauline for a few more details in writing and she obliged:-

"The animal that I saw at or about 3 a.m., crossing the dual carriageway at (deleted by author) n Bristol some years ago, was interesting. I initially thought it was a fox - russet brown in

colour- but quickly realised it was too tall and long legged. The ears were bigger, pointed up, with slightly rounded tips. The extraordinary thing was the large, regular round spots in a dark colour. I can only imagine it was a spotted hyena - it still intrigues me- and it didn't give the impression of being a domestic cross"

Having TV, radio and newspapers calling me Britain's Big Cat is cringeworthy enough ~ I don't want to be known as England's Spotted Hyena Hunter. I simply offer these reports that have come from sincere and, as late colleague J Allen Kynek would put it, "credible witnesses".

Incidentally, while typing this article MH who works at BBC Radio Nottingham, has been in touch to tell me that yesterday (16th November, 1999) he was driving from Derby to Stoke when, near to Etwall, he saw a road kill. It was so peculiar that he couldn't believe and so he stopped and drove back. What he found was a grey, 18-24 inches high, tailed monkey. He observed the animal from his car but noticed that it had no sign of decomposition or having been hit by a car. However, the night had been very cold and the animal may have died from hypothermia.

Colleagues at Radio Nottingham suggested he phone me. He is puzzled and would not have reported it normally because it was dead but his colleagues knew I'd be interested. All I can hope is that some Reader finds this of interest and if anyone has an out-of-place creature report, or any unusual animal report please let me know.

The Parrots of Woodbury

By Jonathan Downes



There is a greengrocer in town whom I visit occasionally because he seems to always have the largest and cheapest avocados in Exeter.

At this time of year, in particular, I am particularly fond of Guacamole, and so my household seems to stock up on these peculiar fruit several times a week!

Whenever I go in, the proprietor, an elderly man with grey hair, a broad Devonshire accent and a faltering gait always asks me the same question. "Ave you found them parrots yet zur?"

The answer is always the same, a slightly shamefaced 'no', and each time I admit that indeed I haven't "found them parrots yet" I feel my stock falling in his eyes, and

eventually I am sure that if I don't find "them parrots" that I will become too embarrassed to visit my favourite Greengrocer's again, and that I will have to either look elsewhere for my avocados or stop eating Guacamole (which in view of my expanding waistline would probably be no bad thing).

It all started about ten years ago when I first discovered my friendly Greengrocer and in an unguarded moment let it slip that I was interested in the more exotic aspects of the local zoology.

My new friend told me that there was a colony of macaws — those enormous parrots which hail from tropical south America living on Woodbury Common — a wild area about twelve miles east of Exeter.

He told me that they had escaped from the collection of an old lady who lived in the village of Woodbury Salterton several years before, and that they were living quite happily in one of the more remote wooded parts of the common where, apparently, his daughter in law saw them on a regular basis.

Wildly excited by these revelations I gave him my telephone number, and asked whether his son or daughter-in-law could telephone me to give me more details.

A few days later she did just that, and the following weekend armed with the

precise details of the location where (she assured me) these birds could always be seen I went on a wild parrot chase.

Sufficient to say that despite eight fruitless hours spent trudging through mossy woodland I saw nothing more exotic than a starling.

I went back the following weekend, again to no avail, and have been back regularly ever since, and although the spot has become one of Toby's (my dog) and my favourite places, we still have had no luck in seeing even the slightest trace of a parrot of any description.

However, it seems that the macaws are still there, because whenever I broach the subject with anyone who lives in the Woodbury area, they have all heard of them.

Most of them have even seen them, and I live in hope that my quest will eventually be successful.

But could a bird adapted for life in the tropical jungles of South America live for any length of time in the cold, wet woodlands of East Devon?

The answer, surprisingly enough, is 'yes'. There are plenty of precedents, and indeed at least one exotic parrot species is becoming quite a pest in parts of the United Kingdom.



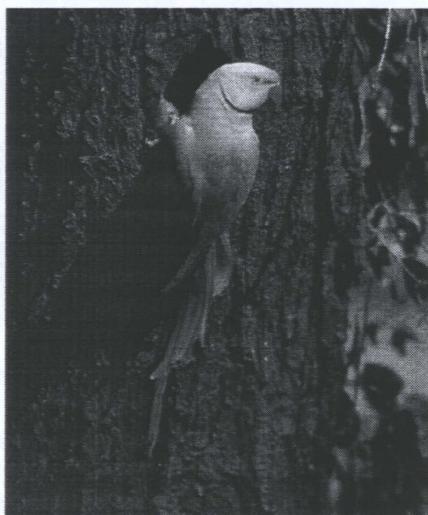
Feral Ring Necked Parakeet in Kent

Within the last few months the Royal Society for the Protection of birds has confirmed that there is now a population of several thousand wild ring necked parakeets – a denizen of tropical Africa – living in and about London.

A flock estimated at about 850 are living near Heathrow Airport, and smaller numbers of two other tropical species – Alexandrine and Monk parakeets – are also living in the south of England albeit in smaller numbers.

Indeed the African ring necked parakeet has now been reported from most counties in England and Wales and has even been described by irate Kentish fruit farmers as a pest on a par with the native bullfinch because of its fondness not only for fruit but for the flower buds of fruit trees.

Apart from the vociferous fruit farming lobby, most people seem quite happy to have these beautiful additions to the British avifauna.



Indeed, thirty years ago, one member of the parrot family – the ubiquitous Budgerigar even got the seal of Royal Approval when the Queen Mother, no less, suggested to the Lord Lieutenant of the Scilly Isles that he introduce a flock of free flying budgies to the estates on the island of Tresco.

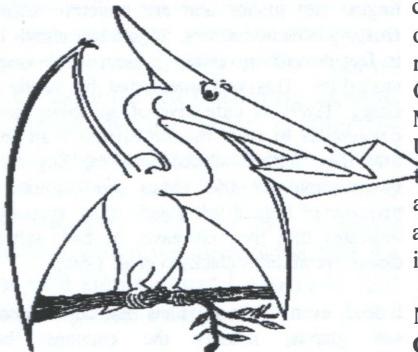
Four pairs from the royal aviaries at Windsor Park were introduced to a specially built aviary and within six years there were over a hundred of these charming Australian grass parakeets living wild in the Scilly Islands. Although there was no evidence that they ever bred away from Tresco, they were seen on many of the neighbouring islands foraging for food.

For several years a pair of cockatiels, another Australasian species kept commonly as a pet lived quite successfully in Powderham woods in south Devon, and during the winter of 1998, an example of an even more exotic species – the black headed parrot from South America – was reported at a bird sanctuary at Dawlish Warren (another site only a few miles from my front doorstep).

The British List – the bible for all UK ornithologists – records another thirteen species of parrot as escapees that have lived wild for a time in the UK, and whilst it is certain that most of these birds reached an unfortunate end, either because of the rigours of the British climate, or more prosaically because only single specimens escaped and so were not able to establish breeding colonies, it also seems likely that when you factor in the burgeoning trade in exotic pets and the advent of global warming, that more of these beautiful birds may yet become established here.

So, my macaws may not be just a local myth after all. Enough local people have seen them to convince me that they are, after all, living happily in the wilds of Woodbury Common. Eventually I hope that Toby and I will be able to see and photograph them, if only so that I can still hold my head up high in my favourite Greengrocer's shop!

LETTERS TO YER EDITOR



The Editor and his band of merry men welcome an exchange of correspondence on any subject of interest to readers of this magazine. We reserve the right to edit letters and would like to stress that opinions voiced are those of the individual correspondent rather than being necessarily those of the editorial team or the Centre for Fortean Zoology. Every attempt is made not to infringe anyone's moral rights or copyright, and we apologise if we have unwittingly done so.

CROCODILES ON MADAGASCAR

DARREN NAISH

In A&M 20, Allan Munro and Richard Freeman discussed the presence of *Crocodylus* crocodiles on Madagascar. Richard argued that the *C. niloticus* population currently living on Madagascar colonised the island prior to its divergence from mainland Africa. This is almost certainly incorrect. Much recent work has focused on the palaeobiogeography of Madagascar, mostly as a result of the discovery of Upper Cretaceous vertebrate faunas discovered in the Mahajanga Basin by teams from the State University of New York at Stony Brook and from the University of Antananarivo (Madagascar), but also because of new interpretations regarding the arrival of recent mammals and reptiles on the island.

Madagascar became isolated in the Late Cretaceous

Upper Cretaceous Madagascar has an endemic fauna of primitive mammals, bizarre crocodiles, titanosaurian sauropods, theropods and other vertebrates (Krause et al. 1999). Among the theropods are *Rahonavis*, a sickle-clawed flying bird that represents a late-surviving relative of *Archaeopteryx* (Forster et al. 1998) and *Majungatholus*, a large abelisauroid with a thickened nasal region originally thought to be from a pachycephalosaur (Sampson et al. 1998). These taxa indicate close biogeographical ties with Late Cretaceous India and South America and show that Madagascar became isolated from these other southern continents late in the Late Cretaceous. Hay et al's (1999) model, which favours terrestrial connections between Madagascar and both India and Antarctica until this time, now seems to be the most favourable scenario.

The problem with the recent Madagascan mammalian and reptilian taxa is that none of them appear to have evolved by Late Cretaceous times: as a consequence, various workers have suggested land bridges between Madagascar and other landmasses subsequent to Madagascar's Late Cretaceous isolation. Most recently, McCall (1997) proposed that the Mozambique Channel included dry land during the Palaeogene and that these areas served as terrestrial connections allowing African mammals to invade Madagascar. Krause et al. (1997) showed that McCall's geological evidence for this scenario was flawed: the seamounts that McCall regarded as part of a continuous landbridge would in fact have formed insignificant islets separated by hundreds of km of seaway.

Crocodiles must have reached Madagascar by sea

McCall's scenario however, even if it was correct, would only posit the existence of a landbridge across the Mozambique Channel between approximately 50 and 35 million years before present. While such a hypothetical bridge would therefore have allowed the ancestors of modern lemurs, tenrecs and carnivorans to invade Madagascar, this is far too early to account for the presence of *C. niloticus* on Madagascar: molecular and fossil evidence indicates that this species first appeared during the late Miocene-early Pliocene, about 5 million years ago (Storrs 1999). Other extant *Crocodylus* species, including *C. cataphractus*, *C. johnstoni* and *C. porosus*, also first appear in the fossil record at about this time (Molnar 1979, Storrs 1999, Willis and Archer 1990).

That the *Crocodylus* and '*C.*' *robustus* populations arrived on Madagascar by crossing the Mozambique Channel is therefore the only alternative. While the term '*C.*' *robustus* in the historical literature was often used for animals now known to belong to the species *C. niloticus*, '*C.*' *robustus* was originally named for a fossil taxon, the affinities of which have only recently become clear. The original '*C.*' *robustus* is not, in fact, a *Crocodylus* crocodile, but a gigantic relative of *Osteolaemus*, the extant dwarf crocodile of western Africa (Brochu and Storrs

1995). A new generic name for '*C.*' *robustus* is presently in press (Storrs pers. comm., 1999).

While neither taxon (*C. niloticus* or the osteolaemine group) appears predisposed to cross expanses of saltwater, it is very probable that they could, and did, do so. While it is well known that Indopacific crocodiles (*C. porosus*) possess lingual salt glands and are therefore adept at crossing oceanic barriers, lingual salt glands have in fact proved universally present in *Crocodylus* crocodiles. This was interpreted by Taplin and Grigg (1989) as indicative of an ability among *Crocodylus* to cross marine barriers - an ability that they further argued was the key to the biogeography of this genus. Furthermore, the presence of lingual salt glands in *all* crocodyliids indicates that they all have, or had, saltwater dispersive abilities (Jackson et al. 1996).

Indeed, even in crocodylians that do not possess salt glands, notably the caimans (being alligatoroids they belong to a freshwater group that does not ever appear to have possessed salt glands), dispersal across a marine barrier simply must have occurred during their history. Caimans first appear in South America early in the Cainozoic - prior to this time they were a North American group - and thus invaded this landmass long prior to the existence of the Panamanian isthmus. Brochu (1999) therefore argued that these alligatoroids could have island-hopped across the Central American seaway. Notably, *Caiman crocodilus* is known to have established itself on Trinidad without human assistance, thereby validating this possibility (Thorbjarnarson 1992).

Conclusions

Contrary to Richard's arguments, therefore, it appears that Recent Madagascan crocodiles could, and most probably did, reach Madagascar by swimming across the Mozambique Channel. To sum up, the evidence for this is:

1. Madagascar became an island late in the Upper Cretaceous and was not linked by landbridges subsequent to this isolation.

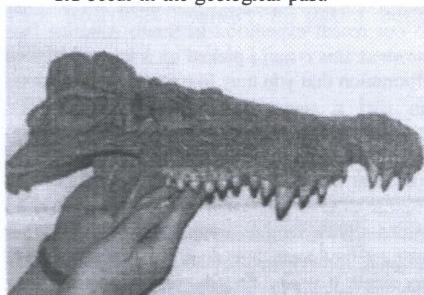
1. Recent Madagascan crocodiles evolved far too recently (within the last 5 million years or so) to have invaded Madagascar prior to its isolation.
2. Unlike alligatoroids, all crocodylids possess salt glands and are therefore capable of some dispersal across marine barriers.
3. Even in crocodylians that totally lack salt glands (alligatoroids), dispersal across marine barriers can occur, and apparently did occur in the geological past.

fossil '*C.*' *robustus* than living *C. niloticus*. Note from the photo that '*C.*' *robustus* has prominent 'horns' on the back of the skull.

Best wishes

Darren Naish

REFERENCES CITED



Skull of the extinct "*Crocodylus robustus*" in lateral view

Finally, if there was no landbridge after the Cretaceous, and if some animals found on Madagascar today evolved *subsequent to* the Cretaceous, how did these animals reach Madagascar? Crocodiles, as explained above, could have swam across the Mozambique Channel, as could have the Madagascan hippos (Garbutt 1999). The other taxa either flew (interestingly, most of the Madagascan birds, like those from the Mascarenes, are more closely related to Asian forms than African ones (J. Hume, pers. comm. 1999)), or rafted across on drifting vegetation. The latter option may appear unlikely but is supported by the recent recording of iguanas crossing a marine barrier comparable in size to the Mozambique Channel (Censky et al. 1998).

PS - while discussing Madagascan crocodiles with Glenn Storrs at the SVP meeting in Denver (1999), I learnt from him that people still report sightings of crocodiles that sound more like the

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Great Snakes

Dear Jonathan,

I always enjoy reading your splendid magazine and congratulate you on the 20th issue.

On our recent expedition in South America [see elsewhere this issue] I picked up a few snippets of information that you may like to put in your files.

There are numerous stories of giant anaconda, mostly in Brazil and Guyana. We heard of a 42 footer that was said to have been captured alive by a fanner after it had eaten a cow. Apparently he enticed it with a pig on a rope! He tried to sell the story to the press but does not seem to have succeeded. It is said that the reptile is now living in a pond on the farmers land in NW Brazil.

At Vallemi on the Rio Paraguay in Paraguay, Indians report a river monster. There are plenty of Caiman around so it might be a large one of them, although the Indians say it is different.

In February 2001 shall be taking another expedition to study the strange giant elephants in Western Nepal.

We shall be in the field for three weeks. We have now found the rest of the herd including cows and calves, plus a tiger eating tiger, which is quite unusual.

If any of your readers are interested they can get details from Melissa Dice, our Expedition Manager who can be contacted on 01747 854898/853353 or email base-ses-explore.or~ or website: www.ses-explore.or~

With best wishes for the next Century.

John Blashford-Snell.

National science day, Plymouth College of Further Education. **24th March 2000**

Plymouth College of Further Education applied themselves to National Science Day with great gusto. We attended two events in what was apparently a fun packed day.

The first event that we attended was a lecture on 'Bucky Balls' -a new type of carbon called Buckminsterfullerene after the inventor of the geodesic dome. These strange and complex carbon molecules look so organic in form that it is difficult not to think of them as some strange new quasi organic creature.

Dr Jonathan Hare of Sussex University gave a fascinating talk on this remarkable substance which was followed by a demonstration of how it is made in the science laboratories of the faculty.

The event was only marred by one incident when a member of the CFZ team who shall remain nameless commented, upon being told by Dr Hare that Buckminsterfullerene was a highly expensive substance that at £150 a gramme it wasn't as

expensive as certain other substances one could mention ☺

However it was the second event of the day that was what really interested us.....

The CFZ turned out in force for a conference on British big cats held at Plymouth Collage of Further Education.

The Panel of experts was almost entirely made up of CFZ members or friends. These include Jon Downes, Chris Moiser, Paul Crowther, Ellis Daw, and myself. Also attending was Bob Jasper the police wildlife liaison officer for the south west.

The topics covered ranged from photographic analysis of claimed beast snapshots to theories on the creature's origins. All seven speakers were convinced of the existence of exotic cats in the British isle. Each speaker talked for approximately 10 minuets and afterwards there were a number of intelligent questions from the audience. Many in attendance had actually seen specimens themselves.

The event was a resounding success; was televised locally and even made it into a national newspaper.

The only disquieting note was the reports Bob Jasper had received of "cervicals" living wild in the area. Obviously a smear campaign is afoot.....

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- 3 Giant Worm in Eastbourne, Lake Monsters of New Guinea, Giant Lizards in Papua, Mystery Cats, Black Dogs on Dartmoor, Scorpion Mystery.**
- 4 Manatees of St Helena, Migo: The Lake Monster of New Britain, The search for the Tasmanian Thylacine.**
- 5 Mystery cats, Loch Ness, More on the "Migo Video", Boars and Pumas, The Hairy Hands of Dartmoor.**
- 6 The Owlman Special; also the Humped Elephants of Nepal, Mystery Cats, Sabre-toothed cats, Mysterious hominids of Africa, The British Nandi Bear?, Bibliography of Cryptozoology books part 1 (by Dr Karl Shuker).**
- 7 Mystery Whales, Strangeness in Scotland, On collecting a cryptid, Bodmin Leopard Skull, Shuker's Cryptozoological Bibliography pt 2.**
- 8 Green Cats and Dogs, Mystery Whales, Quagga Project, Bibliography of Cryptozoological books (3rd & concluding part), Malayan Man Beast.**
- 9 Hong Kong Tiger, Horseman of Lincolnshire, Scottish BHM, Congo Peacock, Mystery Whales.**
- 10 Mystery Moth of Madagascar, Bengal Leopard Cats, The Derry, Wild Boars in Kent, a new Irish lake monster, mystery whales and the truth about the Essex Beach Corpses.**

11 The "Walruses Special", also: Feathered Dinosaurs, Ground Sloth Survival in North America, Mystery Whales, Initial Bipedalism.

12 Lions: The Barbary Lion, etc. More Feathered Dinosaurs, Chinese Crabs in the Thames, Mystery Animals of Germany, News from New Zealand.

13 Pangolins; also Moby the Sperm Whale, Barking Beast of Bath, Yorkshire ABCs, Molly the Singing Oyster, Leatherback Turtles, Walruses.

14 The Dragons of Yorkshire, Irish mystery animals, In Search Of "Gambo", Charlie Fort and the Vampire Sheep Slayer - and Jackals; and the first of Clinton Keeling's Cogitations - comments on the previous issue.

15 Lake Dakataua "Migo" monster update, The Weird Warbling Whatsit of the Westcountry, The Beast of Llangurig, The Waspman, The Bigfoot "Murders", and three articles on Beavers.

16 Expedition Report: The Search for El Chupacabra; Quagga Project update; Bestiary #1; Snakes with Legs; Eastern Cougars; Giant Lizards in the English Countryside?

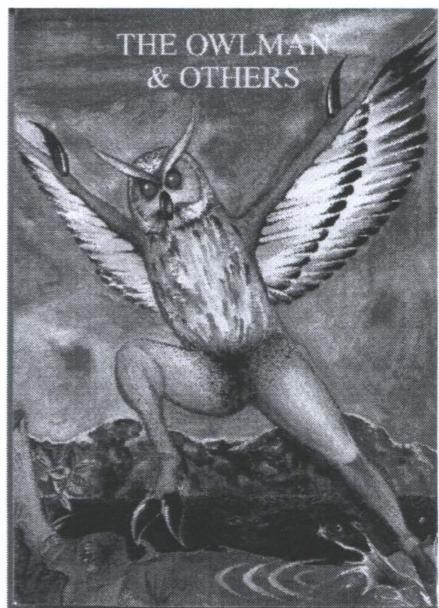
17 British Wolverine - or muddy badger?, Turtle Tales, Killer Bees, The Ziphidae - possible new species, Vertebrate palaeontology, Video: the Beast of Bodmin press conference.

18 GUST expedition; Wolverines; crypto sharks; Puerto Rican lamprey; Out-of-place animals in Kent; Quaggas and hybrids.

19 The Case of the British Thylacine; Bestiary - The Rukh; Coypu in a Yorkshire Attic, Sweet Wallaby of Mine; Sipandjee - An Unidentified Ape; Ayrshire Tales; Curiosity Killed the Cat; Ground Sloth Survival.

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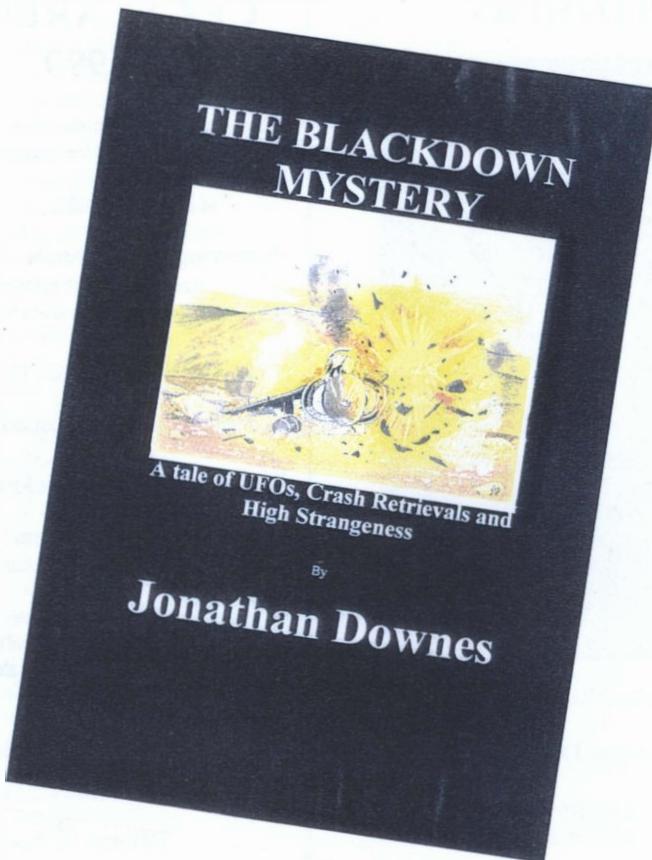
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